


An Index-Journal special report

‘HISTORY OF VIOLENCE’

A look at inmates suing McCormick Correctional



Korell Battle
Age: 43
Offenses: Armed robbery and firearms provision
County of Conviction: Lexington
Projected release date: Not eligible
Stint at McCormick: Nov. 28, 2016 to May 12, 2017

Current Location: Ridge-land Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: On May 1, 2017, a group of inmates attacked him in his room, stabbing him in the head, right shoulder and chest. No correctional officer was in the wing when the attack happened. Ten days later, two inmates attacked Battle in his room, stabbing him in his head, back and left arm. His door was unlocked and the correctional officer was not in the wing.



Donsurvi Chisolm
Age: 38
Offenses: Murder (two counts), assault with intent to kill and firearms provision
Counties of Conviction: Berkeley and Dorchester
Projected release date: July 7, 2032
Stint at McCormick: Aug. 18, 2014 to Sept. 14, 2017
Current Location: Broad River Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: On Aug. 23, 2017, Chisolm was returning to his cell from a yoga class when two inmates shoved him into his room and began stabbing him in his head and body, with a third inmate helping them. An officer was not on the wing at the time.

Alvin Davis
Age: 51
Offenses: Armed robbery (three counts) and attempted armed robbery
Counties of Conviction: Lexington and Richland

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INDEX-JOURNAL FILE

Built in 1987, McCormick Correctional Institution is a maximum-security prison at 386 Redemption Way that houses 1,124 inmates.

Several lawsuits link prison attacks in McCormick to absent officers

By MATTHEW HENSLEY
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A hyperviolent facility where gang members roam free and attacks happen in the all-too-often absence of corrections officers — that’s how lawyers describe McCormick’s prison in lawsuits filed on behalf of 13 current and former inmates.

These suits, all filed in McCormick County by Georgetown-based Bell Legal Group, come after the maximum-security prison saw two fatal stabbings and an escape in late 2016.

The state’s prison system has received national attention after a series of violent events that include a riot earlier this month that left seven dead at Lee Correctional in Bishopville, which is the nation’s deadliest prison riot in 25

Inside Cases at a glance. Page 10A

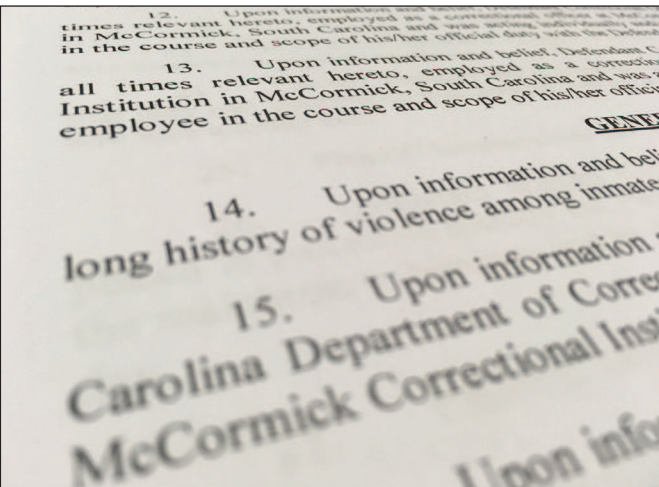
years, and the killing of four inmates on April 7, 2017 at Kirkland Correctional Institution in Columbia.

State leaders blame the system’s problems on a high rate of vacancies and low pay. At one point, about half of the correctional officer positions at McCormick Correctional were open. Last Monday, Gov. Henry McMaster issued an executive order that broadly increases hiring and procurement powers for the state Department of Corrections in an attempt to alleviate some of the understaffing issues.

The order allows for “on-the-spot hiring” of security personnel, clears the way for overtime pay, the creation of new job incentives, salary increases and exemptions to job posting announcements.

Two of the filings representing 11 of the

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MATTHEW HENSLEY | INDEX-JOURNAL

Lawsuits allege “a long history of violence” among inmates at the state Department of Corrections.

SCDC settles wrongful death suit for \$350,000

By MATTHEW HENSLEY
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Six weeks after an inmate was seen with a “noose tied around his neck,” the 38-year-old was found dead in his McCormick cell from asphyxiation.

Oran L. Smith’s death was ruled a suicide.

In December — more than three years after his death — the prison system and the man’s estate reached a \$350,000 settlement in a wrongful death suit.

The action, which was filed by lawyers for Oran Smith’s mother, Janet, alleges medical malpractice and gross negligence, citing failures to give ade-

quate medical care or intervene to prevent his suicide.

The civil action filed on behalf of Smith’s mother and an affidavit from Dr. James E. Bellard describe the circumstances surrounding Smith’s death.

Smith had a number of symptoms of mental illness, including “depression,

delusional behavior, paranoia, mania, audio and visual hallucinations, and expressing suicidal ideations.” His prison medical records showed he was bipolar and had a traumatic brain injury, Bellard wrote, but “it appears that Mr. Smith was never given

See **SETTLES**, page 9A

Longtime Ninety Six teacher Lynn Sargent beloved by many



SUBMITTED

Lynn Sargent, center, poses with her son, Jeremiah, and daughter, Bekah Grace.

By ARIEL GILREATH
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She grew up thinking of Ninety Six as her other home — crossing the border between the town and Greenwood nearly every week to visit her relatives.

It wasn’t until Lynn Sargent married her husband, who was from Ninety Six, that she moved there.

For 40 years, Sargent has taught kindergarten and third grade — 37 of them have been spent in Ninety Six Primary School.

Sargent, 63, taught third grade for 13 years in Ninety Six before she was able to transition to kindergarten teacher.

“I loved teaching third grade



CLOSER LOOK

LYNN SARGENT

and I enjoyed it, but kindergarten is where my heart is,” Sargent said.

After 40 years, she never grew tired of teaching.

“Never,” Sargent said. “Every group of kids is different. You can never, ever do the same thing year after year. Every group is a unique and different group that comes in, and you have to realize that. And you have to adjust and meet their needs in different ways every

Even Closer
Name: Lynn Sargent
Age: 63
Family: She lives in Ninety Six with her two adopted children.
Education: She has a bachelor’s in elementary education from Lander College and a master’s degree from Clemson University in early childhood education.
Of note: When Sargent was younger, she wanted to be a pro golfer.
single year.”
Among those who love her, Sargent is known as someone who works tirelessly to help others.
For years, Sargent and her

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Seoul: Kim says he'll give up nukes if US vows not to attack

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told his South Korean counterpart at their historic summit that he would be willing to give up his nuclear weapons if the U.S. commits to a formal end to the Korean War and a pledge not to attack the North, Seoul officials said Sunday.

Kim also vowed during his meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Friday to shut down the North's nuclear test site in May and disclose the process to experts and journalists from South Korea and the United States, Seoul's presidential of-

fice said.

While there are lingering questions about whether North Korea will ever decide to fully relinquish its nukes as it heads into negotiations with the U.S., Kim's comments amount to the North's most specific acknowledgment yet that "denuclearization" would constitute surrendering its weapons.

U.S. national security adviser John Bolton reacted coolly to word that



KIM JONG UN

Kim would abandon his weapons if the United States pledged not to invade.

Asked on CBS' "Face the Nation" whether the U.S. would make such a promise, Bolton said: "Well, we've heard this before. This is — the North Korean propaganda playbook is an infinitely rich resource."

"What we want to see from them is evidence that it's real and not just rhetoric," he added.

Seoul officials, who have shuttled between Pyongyang and Washington to broker talks between Kim and President Donald Trump that are expected in May or June, said Kim has

expressed genuine interest in dealing away his nuclear weapons.

But there has been skepticism because North Korea for decades has been pushing a concept of "denuclearization" that bears no resemblance to the American definition. The North has long vowed to pursue nuclear development unless Washington removes its 28,500 troops from South Korea and the nuclear umbrella defending South Korea and Japan.

During their summit at a truce village on the border, Moon and Kim promised to work toward the "complete denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula but made no references to

verification or timetables.

Kim also expressed optimism about his meeting with Trump, Moon's spokesman Yoon Young-chan said.

"Once we start talking, the United States will know that I am not a person to launch nuclear weapons at South Korea, the Pacific or the United States," Kim said, according to Yoon.

Yoon also quoted Kim as saying: "If we maintain frequent meetings and build trust with the United States and receive promises for an end to the war and a non-aggression treaty, then why would we need to live in difficulty by keeping our nuclear weapons?"

Iraq's IS trials move quickly

Associated Press

TEL KEIF, Iraq — The entire trial lasted just more than half an hour. A grey-haired man was led into the defendant's booth. He fidgeted as the judge read the charges against him: Swearing allegiance to the Islamic State group and working for the militants as an employee at a water station.

"Not guilty," the defendant, Abdullah al-Jabouri, told the judge in a session of one of Iraq's counterterrorism courts this past week. He said he had worked for Nineveh province's water department for more than 20 years and stayed at his post when IS took over in 2014, but he denied ever swearing allegiance to the group.

"All government employees continued in their jobs at the water facility," the 47-year-old Sunni Arab protested.

"I am asking you to speak only about yourself," the judge interrupted him. Soon after, the judge and his two associates went into deliberations. A few minutes later they returned with their verdict: Guilty, sentenced to 15 years in prison. Al-Jabouri, his head bowed,

was quickly led out and the next accused IS member was ushered in.

Iraq is holding huge numbers of detainees on suspicion of ties to the Islamic State group — about 11,000, according to Iraqi officials — and they are being rushed through counterterrorism courts in trials that raise questions about whether justice is being done. At the same time, families are often left in the dark about where their loved ones are being detained or what their fates are.

The Associated Press last week attended several trials being held in Tel Keif, north of Mosul.

Throughout the system, the trials are usually short, often less than 30 minutes, and most end with guilty verdicts. Convictions are based on confessions that defendants and rights groups say intelligence agents extract by intimidation, torture and abuse. Also used as evidence are reports from anonymous informants, raising the possibility of false accusations made as revenge against rivals. The same defense lawyer works dozens of cases, with little knowledge of the defendants.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Women whose husbands are detained by Iraqi security forces on suspicion of ties to the Islamic State sit in their kitchen with some of their children at the Daquq Camp near Kirkuk, Iraq.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

A member of the Central American migrant caravan, holding a child, looks through the border wall toward a group of people gathered on the U.S. side as he stands on the beach where the border wall ends at the ocean in Tijuana, Mexico.

Central American migrants arrive for rally at US border

Associated Press

TIJUANA, Mexico — Packed into five old school buses, hundreds of Central American migrants arrived at the U.S. border Sunday for a rally, to be followed by a planned mass attempt to apply for asylum, in a direct challenge to the Trump administration.

The migrants, many traveling with children, left a downtown Tijuana shelter where they had been staying. Police with flashing lights escorted the buses to a cross-border rally at a Pacific Ocean beach, with supporters gathering on both sides of security fencing.

Asked how he felt as he boarded the bus, Nefi Hernandez of Honduras replied, "Nervous." He said he intended to seek asylum with his wife and infant daughter, who was born on the journey through Mexico.

President Donald Trump and members of his Cabinet have been tracking the caravan of migrants, calling it a threat to the U.S. since it started March 25 in the Mexican city of Tapachula, near the Guatemala border.

Attorney General Jeff Sessions called the caravan "a deliberate attempt to undermine our laws and overwhelm our system," pledging to send more immigration judges to the border to resolve cases if needed.

Trump administration officials have railed against what they call "catch-and-release" policies that allow people requesting asylum to be released from custody into the U.S. while their claims make their way through the courts in a process that can last a year.

The arrival at San Diego's San Ysidro border crossing, the nation's busiest, marked

the end of a monthlong journey by foot, freight train and bus for the migrants, many of whom said they feared for their safety in their homes.

Hernandez, 24, said a gang in his hometown of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, threatened to kill him and his family if he did not sell drugs.

Jose Cazares, 31, said he faced death threats in the Honduran city of Yoro because a gang member suspected of killing the mother of his children learned one of his Cazares' sons reported the crime to police.

But the travelers faced an uncertain future as they prepared to turn themselves in and face asylum. U.S. immigration lawyers conducted free legal workshops for the group, warning them they face possible separation from their children and detention for many months.

Pompeo: US stands 'with Israel' in fight against Iran

Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Sunday gave a warm boost of support to Israel in its standoff against Iran, saying "the United States is with Israel in this fight."

Pompeo has been using the Middle East leg of his first trip abroad as America's top diplomat to call for concerted international action to punish Iran for its missile programs.

The tough line was welcomed in Israel, which considers Iran its greatest threat and has been leading calls for the international community to revise its 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. He arrived after visiting Saudi Arabia, another fierce rival of Iran.

"We remain deeply concerned about Iran's dangerous escalation of threats to Israel and the region and Iran's ambition to dominate the Middle East remains," Pompeo said after a nearly two-hour meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "The United States is with Israel in this fight."

Israel has called for tough international action against Iran, citing its hostile rhetoric, support for anti-Israel militant groups and development of long-range missiles.

It also has complained the 2015 nuclear deal does not do enough to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear-weapons capability, and expressed growing concerns about Iran's involvement in the civil war in neighboring Syria. It says it will not allow Iran to establish a permanent military presence in Syria, fearing the Iranians will launch attacks.

TEACHER

From page 1A

husband have gone on mission trips to China, Belize and Costa Rica. She spent a month out of her summer teaching English in China in 2000 and 2001.

It was those trips that inspired the Sargents to adopt Jeremiah, who is from an orphanage in Cambodia, in 2003. They later adopted Bekah Grace, from China, in 2007. Both Jeremiah, 16, and Bekah Grace, 11, attend schools in Greenwood County School District 52.

In 2010, she went to Cambodia and decided to participate

in an exchange program for students. The Sargents have had two exchange students stay with them over the years.

"Once we made the decision to adopt, it was like we became obsessed with thinking that we could bring a child here and they would have a life they would never have there," Sargent said.

The Sargents also had two biological children — a daughter who is the assistant principal at Ninety Six High School and a son who died in 2005.

In 2014, Sargent's husband, Bobby, died from cancer.

"Since he passed away, it's been really hard, and we didn't go anywhere for the first year

or so," Sargent said. "But since (then), Jeremiah and Bekah and I have gone to Costa Rica."

Sargent plans on visiting Haiti with her children this summer to do mission work.

"We just go to the different places when we hear about something or just feel like that's the place God's leading us to at that time," Sargent said.

Sargent found out she was laid off from Ninety Six Primary School at a board meeting one week ago where dozens of people came out to show their support for her.

She was one of two retiree teachers who were laid off because of budget cuts, district administration said.

Ninety Six Mayor Mike Rowe showed up to support her along with friends and co-workers. Sargent taught Rowe when he was a student, as well as his son.

Beverly Brown, a kindergarten teacher at Ninety Six Primary, has known Sargent for 25 years as the sister she never had.

"She's just all about serving others and denies herself a lot to serve everybody else," Brown said. "Is she a perfect person? I would never say that, but she is as close as you can get."

In her spare time, Sargent hosts Bible study groups at her home, volunteers with Connie Maxwell Children's Home and provides food for people in

need through a program she started called Soul Food.

"She's helped people find homes to live in, she's even opened up her home at times when people were down on their luck. If someone in this community needs something, they know she will help them," Brown said. "She's the light in a very dark world for so many people."

Cathy Wilkie, who has been friends with Sargent for 30 years, said that's just how she is.

"She's been through a lot of adversity, but she pops right back up and keeps going," Wilkie said. "She just wants to do for others and love others

— that's her main goal in life, I think, is to love others."

Sargent said her faith in God has always brought her through hard times.

Her favorite Bible verse is Jeremiah 29:11 — for which her adopted son is named after.

"It says, 'For I know the plans that I have for you, plans to not harm you or discourage you, but to prosper you,'" Sargent said. "I know God has a plan for me, even in the midst of things that are going on now."

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SETTLES

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a comprehensive mental health evaluation" while in prison.

The Sept. 19, 2016 filings lay out his final 41 days, beginning at Broad River Correctional.

On Aug. 27, 2014, prison staff saw he had a "noose tied around his neck ... trying to hang himself." Three days later, he attempted suicide by taking 10 Remeron pills. Remeron, a brand that has mirtazapine as its active ingredient, is an antidepressant. The next day, officers saw him "attempting to hang himself" by "wrapping his waist restraint around the top of the ceiling."

After his third suicide attempt in five days, prison officials decided to transfer him to

McCormick Correctional.

The move happened Sept. 3, 2014. He was placed on "Crisis Intervention status" four times in the month after transferring to McCormick — the fourth time after he cut himself and exhibited "serious paranoid behavior."

During one of his evaluations at McCormick, a counselor noted his poor hygiene, paranoia and that he told her he was "seeing people trying to kill him."

He was removed from crisis intervention status on Oct. 2, 2014 and placed in a cell with video monitoring so authorities could continue to observe him. At 10:01 a.m. on Oct. 7, 2014, he was found dead in his cell. He'd placed a piece of paper over the video camera and hanged himself using his bed

sheet.

Bellard faulted corrections medical staff for:

- "Failing to exercise reasonable care to ensure that Mr. Smith ... was evaluated by a psychologist, psychiatrist or other licensed mental health provider before his removal from Crisis Intervention status" once at Broad River and all four times at McCormick.
- "Failing to perform an appropriate evaluation of Mr. Smith's reported traumatic brain injury and dementia."
- "Failing to prescribe Mr. Smith to anti-psychotic medications" despite past success on the drugs and his "delusional and paranoid behavior."
- "Failing to exercise reasonable care to recognize and treat Mr. Smith's mounting mental health emergency."

Attorneys filing an answer Nov. 15, 2016 on behalf of the prison system denied any wrongdoing and wrote that Smith "was provided the appropriate medical and mental health care."

Judge Alford L. Smith, no relation, signed the settlement Dec. 11, which awarded \$350,000 to Oran Smith's estate \$350,000. Of that, \$148,293.65 went to attorney fees for Evans Moore LLC.

Smith's mom is not alone in taking issue with medical care provided at McCormick Correctional. The four lawsuits filed by Bell Legal Group LLC on behalf of 13 inmates also allege the facility provides inadequate care.

Among their list of complaints about the Department of Corrections and the Mc-

Cormick prison, those lawsuits said inmates, when injured, are typically "denied medical treatment, given substandard medical treatment or the medical treatment is unreasonably delayed."

Among other things, the complaints filed by Bell Legal Group allege:

- A diabetic inmate who was denied access to medicine — including his insulin — along with the rest of his wing for 2 1/2 days because they were on lockdown after inmates took over the wing. The inmates were also denied food and water. This nearly sent him into a diabetic coma and put him "at serious risk of death." The inmate "suffered extreme physical and emotional distress because of the lack of food, water and medication; the failure to get

his insulin in a regular timely manner damages his kidneys."

- An inmate was left partially paralyzed after assailants severed nerves in his spine on Nov. 19, 2015. As of when a lawsuit was filed on Nov. 7, 2017, he had not received promised spinal therapy.

- After being attacked, an inmate was treated at Self Regional Medical Center. He "got stitches and staples while at the hospital but they were not removed by the (prison) nurses; he had to remove them himself."

A state Department of Corrections spokesman did not respond to an email sent Thursday seeking comment.

Contact Assistant Editor Matthew Hensley at 864-943-2529 or on Twitter @IJMattHensley.

INMATES

From page 1A

Projected release date: Nov. 1, 2032
Stint at McCormick: March 3, 2014 to Oct. 16, 2017



ALVIN DAVIS

Current Location: Lee Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: While being escorted on Oct. 4, 2017, an inmate got out of his handcuffs and took a correctional officer's keys at knifepoint. The inmate then opened doors to cells and pushed Davis onto his bed and was going to attack him. Davis' roommate convinced the man not to attack Davis, but the roommate was then taken hostage and Davis was forced to kneel with a knife to his throat.

Craig Emanuel Ellerbe Jr.
Age: 24
Offense: Armed robbery



CRAIG E. ELLERBE JR.

County of Conviction: Marion
Projected release date: July 3, 2022
Stint at McCormick: Sept. 21-22, 2017
Current Location: Lee Correctional
Lawsuit alleges: On Sept. 21, 2017, Ellerbe saw inmates armed with "a long sword" and a "12-inch ice pick" in a stairwell. As he tried to leave, inmates began stabbing him in the head, face, neck, arms, chest, back and hands.

Lorenzo Juquel Herion
Age: 26
Offenses: Voluntary manslaughter (2 counts)



LORENZO J. HERION

County of Conviction: Horry
Projected release date: Aug. 7, 2028
Stint at McCormick: June 25, 2014 to July 23, 2017
Current Location: Broad River Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: On July 23, 2017, Herion was attacked while in the prayer room. He managed to pin his attacker, but another inmate came into the room and stabbed him in the back. The correctional officer was not on the wing when the attack happened.

Norman Mitchell
Age: 47
Offenses: Carjacking with bodily injury and failure to stop for officer



NORMAN MITCHELL

County of Conviction: Richland
Projected release date: Not eligible
Stint at McCormick: July 14, 2010 to April 30, 2015
Current Location: Broad River Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: On April 30, 2015, Mitchell's roommate stabbed him eight times. The attack came more than a year after Mitchell began asking to change rooms because he "was in fear of his life" from the constant arguments and fights his roommate started.

Jamarcus Murray
Year of birth: 1982
Offenses: Common law robbery/strong-arm robbery



JAMARCUS E. MURRAY

County of Conviction: Aiken
Note: Murray is no longer an inmate and the state Department of Corrections online inmate search does not keep historic data on those who have been released.

Lawsuit alleges: As Murray was walking to get breakfast on April 16, 2016 — the day after he transferred into McCormick Correctional — someone threw a jacket over his head and dragged him into a room. His face was beaten and he was stabbed in the head, chest and under his armpit. No officer was on the wing when the attack happened. He was moved to McCormick after he was attacked during a "riot" at Broad River Correctional.

Oswald O'Neal
Age: 36
Offense: Murder



OSWALD O'NEAL

County of Conviction: Berkeley
Projected release date: Jan. 21, 2031
Stints at McCormick: Oct. 7, 2002 to Dec. 6, 2002; March 20, 2006 to Nov. 20, 2007; April 13, 2009 to May 17, 2010; and April 15, 2015 to May 17, 2015
Current Location: Perry Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: While at Lee Cor-

rection, O'Neal was stabbed 17 times during a riot in May 2014. When he was being transferred to McCormick in 2015, he expressed concerns about move because some of the inmates who had stabbed him at Lee were now at McCormick Correctional. On May 16, 2015, someone approached him from behind and attacked him with a pipe, breaking two of his teeth and leaving him with bruises. No officer was present when he was attacked.

Johnell Richardson
Age: 26
Offenses: Armed robbery and kidnapping
County of Conviction: Florence



JOHNELL RICHARDSON

Projected release date: May 3, 2034
Stint at McCormick: Feb. 27, 2017 to present
Lawsuit alleges: On Oct. 6, 2017, eight inmates came into Richardson's room, demanded their television and then began stabbing him and his roommate. The inmates left his room "because they were taking over the wing." Richardson barricaded his door until correctional officers retook the wing with tear gas. No correctional officers were in the wing when the attack started.

Dayquan Markee Robinson
Age: 26
Offenses: Armed robbery, attempted armed robbery and discharging a firearm into a dwelling



DAYQUAN ROBINSON

County of Conviction: Sumter
Projected release date: June 16, 2024
Stint at McCormick: Jan. 14-28, 2013; July 10, 2013 to Nov. 1, 2017
Current Location: Lieber Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: On Sept. 6, 2017, Robinson was standing in front of his room when an inmate came up from behind him and stabbed him in his neck, back and chest. No correctional officer was on the wing during the attack.

Kaseem Stephens
Age: 40
Offense: Murder



KASEEM STEPHENS

County of Conviction: Charleston
Projected release date: March 16, 2048
Stint at McCormick: April 2, 2009 to Nov. 19, 2015
Current Location: Lee Correctional Institution
Lawsuit alleges: On Nov. 19, 2015, two inmates pulled knives on Stephens and demanded his cellphone. When he said he didn't have a cellphone, one inmate grabbed him while the other stabbed him. His spine was severed, leaving him partially paralyzed. His ear was also severed. The attack came after prison officials heard that a threat had been made against him and transferred him to another wing. The corrections officer did not lock his door before leaving the wing on the day of the attack.

Jason Lamar Storms
Age: 39
Offenses: Armed robbery (2 counts)
County of Conviction: Lexington and Pickens



JASON L. STORMS

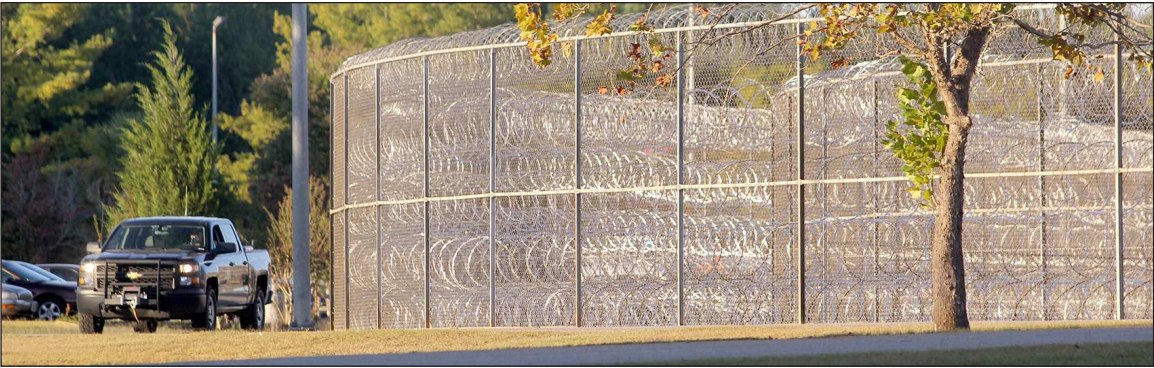
Projected release date: Nov. 28, 2026
Stint at McCormick: March 3, 2014 to Feb. 1, 2018
Current Location: Ridgeland Correctional
Lawsuit alleges: On Jan. 18, two inmates demanded Storms' belongings and, after he refused to give them his property or pay them \$500, they began hitting him and he was stabbed with a bowie-style knife. No correctional officer was in the wing during the attack.

Delronezy Washington
Age: 29
Offenses: Murder and armed robbery



DELRONEZY WASHINGTON

County of Conviction: Dorchester
Projected release date: May 27, 2047
Stint at McCormick: Feb. 21, 2017 to present
Lawsuit alleges: On Oct. 6, 2017, eight inmates came into Washington's room, demanded their television and then began stabbing him and his roommate. The inmates left his room "because they were taking over the wing." Washington barricaded his door until correctional officers retook the wing with tear gas. No correctional officers were in the wing when the attack started.



INDEX-JOURNAL FILE

Three layers of fences surround McCormick Correctional Institution with razor wire lining them from top to bottom.

LAWSUITS

From page 1A

inmates paint a picture of a prison run amok. Lawyers write that the state Department of Corrections "has a long history of violence among inmates," with a "complete failure by the department to "keep weapons out of the hands of inmates housed at McCormick Correctional Institution." At McCormick Correctional and other state prisons, the filings said, "gangs are allowed to run free and commit whatever crimes they want" and those inmates who don't follow the rules or break laws seldom face consequences.

The complaints also describe it as "common practice" for correctional officers to "leave doors unlocked when they should be locked" and to "leave their posts without being relieved by another correctional officer," which the suits allege is "facilitating fights and stabbings." The filings note that these violate the department's policies and procedures. Jeff Taillon, state Department of Corrections spokesman, did not respond to an email sent Thursday seeking comment about these characterizations.

Just one of the 13 attacks at McCormick Correctional described in the suits happened while an SCDC employee was present — and that correctional officer was the first to be assailed.

On Oct. 4 — the same day inmates climbed to the roof of a prison dorm, and a few days after a water main break put McCormick Correctional under a boil water notice — an inmate being escorted by an officer managed to get out of his handcuffs and put a knife to the officer's throat, one of the filings said. That inmate then took the officer's keys and began opening doors.

The inmate then went into the cell of Alvin Davis and Kenneth Huckabee, the complaint said, where he took Huckabee hostage and someone held a knife to Davis' throat while he kneeled on the floor. Davis was one of seven plaintiffs listed on the latest lawsuit, which was filed March 19.

In audio from a 911 call the Index-Journal obtained in October, a woman reported that seven inmates or so were on the roof of a dorm and that inmates had started a fire at the facility. The department denied that a fire was set.

Once officers got control of the unit back, the lawyers wrote, they placed it on lockdown and no one got food or medicine for about 2 1/2 days — which nearly caused Davis to go into a diabetic coma.

Two days after inmates climbed on the roof, inmates again seized control of one of the prison's wings.

One of the filings alleges that eight inmates went into the cell of Johnell Richardson and Delronezy Washington and, after the pair refused to hand over their television, the other inmates began stabbing them. Richardson and Washington are among Davis' co-plaintiffs.

The inmates left "because they were taking over the wing," the document said, so Richardson and Washington "barricaded themselves in their room" until correctional officers retook the wing using tear gas.

The day it happened, Taillon told the Index-Journal there was an inmate-on-inmate fight. He said that "two will receive medical attention at the facility, one will receive outside medical attention."

It was unclear whether Washington and Richardson were the two inmates he said would be treated in house.

Despite requesting help, Washington received no medical care and Richardson wasn't treated until a week later, the filing said.

Violence at other prisons

While the lawsuits focus on events at McCormick Correctional, they also describe two attacks that happened at other prisons.

In one filing, lawyers said Jamarcus Murray was attacked during a riot at Broad River Correctional days before coming to McCormick. That document doesn't detail what hap-

Cases at a glance

Norman Mitchell v South Carolina Department of Corrections, et al

Filed: Jan. 17, 2017
Plaintiffs: Norman Mitchell
Defendants: South Carolina Department of Corrections and inmate Dwight Jones
Causes of action: Gross negligence/reckless conduct; failure to render appropriate medical attention; failure to relocate plaintiff; and assault and battery

Oswald O'Neal v South Carolina Department of Corrections

Filed: May 12, 2017
Plaintiff: Oswald O'Neal
Defendant: South Carolina Department of Corrections
Cause of action: Personal injury

Kaseem Stephens, et al, v South Carolina Department of Corrections, et al

Filed: Nov. 7, 2017
Plaintiffs: Kaseem Stephens, Korell Battle, Lorenzo Herion and Dayquan Robinson
Defendants: South Carolina Department of Corrections, Warden Leroy Cartledge, Warden Michael Stephan, correctional officer Goldman, correctional officer Kelly and correctional officer Anders
Causes of action: For temporary and permanent injunctive relief; violations of civil rights, general allegations; violation of civil rights, failure to implement appropriate policies, customs and practices; and violation of Tort Claims Act of South Carolina

Donsurvi Chisolm, et al, v South Carolina Department of Corrections, et al

Filed: March 19, 2018
Plaintiffs: Donsurvi Chisolm, Alvin Davis, Craig E. Ellerbe Jr., Johnell Richardson, Delronezy Washington, Jason Storms and Jamarcus Murray
Defendants: South Carolina Department of Corrections, Warden Leroy Cartledge and Warden Micheal Stephan
Causes of action: For temporary and permanent injunctive relief; violations of civil rights, general allegations; violation of civil rights, failure to implement appropriate policies, customs and practices; and violation of Tort Claims Act of South Carolina

pened at Broad River, but a separate lawsuit filed in Richland County on behalf of Murray and eight other inmates describes an attack that unfolded April 4, 2016.

A correctional officer had unlocked the doors between two wings, allowing 15-20 inmates to pass from one side to the other, then went to a separate room. Some of those inmates had weapons and wore masks, the complaint said, all within view of the officer.

After the attack started, the officer came into the wing, locked the door, then locked himself in a closet, according to the filing. He came out of the closet when first responders arrived and ran out of the wing, then locked the door back.

Meanwhile, the complaint said, inmates were attacked with "knives, machetes, wooden sticks, and metal poles." During the attack, Murray was stabbed in the shoulder.

The other lawsuit said he was told he would be moved to Perry Correctional Institution and put in lockup for his protection, but instead was moved to McCormick Correctional and put in general population.

He arrived between 8 and 9 p.m. April 15, 2016. The complaint said the following morning — and just 12 days after the Broad River attack — he was walking to breakfast when someone came up behind him, threw a jacket over him and dragged him into a room where he was stabbed in the head, chest and under his armpit.

After the attack, while an inmate was helping him "correctional officers could see him bleeding but looked down, and kept walking away from him," the filing said.

A complaint filed on behalf of inmate Oswald O'Neal describes how the now-36-year-old was stabbed 17 times during a riot in May 2014 at Lee Correctional. An inmate search detail report shows he was transferred from Lee to "Outside Medical" on May 12, 2014.

When O'Neal learned he was being transferred to the McCormick prison in April 2015, his lawyer wrote, he told officials he "couldn't go to McCormick because some of the people who stabbed him were there."

Correctional officers told him he could take up the issue with prison officials in McCormick. After the transfer, the warden told him there was nothing he could do.

On May 16, 2015 — 31 days after the transfer — someone attacked him from behind with a pipe, breaking two of his teeth and leaving him with bruises on his head.

A response filed by the Depart-

ment of Corrections' attorney said the department "lack(s) sufficient information" on O'Neal's transfer concerns and about the Lee Correctional attack while acknowledging that he was attacked with a pipe at McCormick. No response has been filed to the complaints filed on Murray's behalf.

Fights over 'territory,' 'money'

In the wake of the Lee prison riot that started April 14 and left seven prisoners dead and 22 injured, the head of the state's prison system said at a press conference that inmates "are fighting over real money and real territory while they're incarcerated."

The McCormick lawsuits do not dwell into whether turf wars played a role in any of the 13 attacks they document, but three are portrayed as attempted armed robberies. In addition to the men who were attacked over a TV, two other inmates reported being accosted over property.

Two inmates with knives demanded Kaseem Stephens hand over his cellphone, one complaint said, then attacked him when he said he didn't have one. The Nov. 19, 2015 stabbing severed his spine, leaving him partially paralyzed, and also severed his ear. The 40-year-old is now at Lee Correctional and, as of the Nov. 7, 2017 filing, was still recovering from the attack.

On Jan. 18, another document said, two inmates demanded that Jason Lamar Storms first hand over his property, then sought \$500 in cash. When he refused, they began hitting him and he was stabbed with a bowie-style knife. The 39-year-old, who's now housed at Ridgeland, received stitches.

While several hundred inmates were transferred from McCormick to Lee last year, Bryan Stirling, director of the state Department of Corrections, said he was skeptical that the moves led to the violence.

Instead, Stirling placed much of the blame for Lee's riots on cellphones. Officers lost control of three separate dorms in a short span — and with inmates having little ability to communicate with those in other dorms besides by phone, Stirling says they were likely used in growing the riot beyond the first dorm. He is asking federal officials to allow the prisons to block cell signal inside the state's prisons.

Contact Assistant Editor Matthew Hensley at 864-943-2529 or on Twitter @IJMattHensley.

SCDC works to fill prison positions



Submitted
An aerial view of Lieber Correctional Institution, a maximum-security prison in Ridgville that houses more than 1,200 inmates.

Lawsuit: Ex-Lieber heads were made scapegoats

By **MATTHEW HENSLEY**
mhensley@indexjournal.com

It's not just those on the front lines in prisons who fret over their low pay — even those in charge of prisons say they don't make enough. Lieber Correctional's former warden and associate warden took issue with their pay in lawsuits filed last month that claim they were made the fall guys after a headline-grabbing

escape from the institution. While Joseph Lavern McFadden was initially promised an \$86,000 salary when he was named warden in 2012, his lawyer wrote, he "only received \$77,000 — a substantially lower wage than any new warden." In James Russell Blackwell's complaint, his lawyers said he was promised \$68,000 and only

See **LAWSUIT**, page 9A

By **MATTHEW HENSLEY**
mhensley@indexjournal.com

If you're looking for a job, the prisons are hiring. About half of all correctional officer positions are open at McCormick Correctional, and Greenwood's Leath has a front-line job vacancy rate of more than 30 percent. Having trouble filling jobs is the norm at South Carolina's prisons, which officials say are victims of the state's prosperity. Bryan Stirling, the state's prisons chief, said the staff levels thrive in recession, but wane in recovery. Since 2011, the system has lost about 150 more officers each year than it can hire. "Every year we were down," he said. Interest in correctional jobs, which awards low pay for working around some of society's most dangerous people, falls with the unemployment rate, according to the prisons chief. With an unemployment rate of 4.4 percent — far below the

11.7 percent rate of the Great Recession — the system has had trouble finding people for the front-line security positions. The trend goes far beyond South Carolina's borders, Stirling said, with every prison struggling to keep officers on payrolls. He's trying to end that trend. "We're doing everything we can do to hire," Stirling said. The agency, which has long struggled to offer competitive pay, has brought salaries up to be more in line with police departments and county jails. Since 2014, starting pay for correctional officers has increased by \$6,463 — or about 24 percent — to \$33,289. At maximum-security prisons such as McCormick, starting pay is \$34,596. With overtime pay, the average first-year employees made close to \$42,000. The agency also offers spot bo-



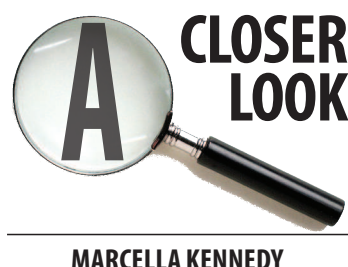
BRYAN STIRLING

Inside

Indeed: Just 23 percent of SC prison workers are satisfied with their pay. **Page 5A**

Salaries for top-earning SCDC employees. **Page 9A**

nuses of up to \$1,500. With the current budget, starting salaries would go up to nearly \$36,000, or about \$18 per hour. Still, the department can't seem to get past the stigma of offering low salaries. Part of the issue, Stirling said, is that prison officials did such a good job telling lawmakers and others about the diminutive pay that they're having difficulty letting people know that paychecks have grown. Last month, Gov. Henry McMaster issued an executive order allows the department to waive "human resource management regulations" to expedite hiring and salary reform. See **POSITIONS**, page 5A



MARCELLA KENNEDY

Kennedy is the face of GLEAMNS' vibrant work

By **ADAM BENSON**
abenson@indexjournal.com

When Marcella Kennedy returned to GLEAMNS after a 14-year hiatus, she wasn't coming back to job. She was returning home. Kennedy worked at GLEAMNS from 2000-07, and returned in 2011 after spending a few years at Beckman Mental Health Center. "I came back home," said Kennedy, a Greenwood native and director for the nonprofit's Community Services Block Grant and Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Kennedy, who has a master's degree in professional mental health counseling from Webster University, worked her way through GLEAMNS, giving her a unique perspective on all facets of its operations. "When I first started, I was young and trying to experience other career options, broadening my horizons and getting exposure to a diverse group of people," she said. "So being welcomed back here just made everything more worthwhile." Now, Kennedy is one of the agency's most public faces, championing its cause and the clients served by GLEAMNS. On Friday, the Greenwood-based agency hosts Community Action Day — showcasing its partners and available resources in the region. It's an event that Kennedy helped organize.

See **KENNEDY**, page 4A

Classic Champion



PHOTOS BY DAVID ROBERTS | INDEX-JOURNAL

LEFT: Vicky Hurst, of Melbourne, Fla., holds the winner's trophy following the final round of the Self Regional Healthcare Foundation Women's Health Classic on Sunday at the Links at Stoney Point.

ABOVE: Hurst waves to the gallery on the 18th hole.

BELOW: Tournament host Jim Medford joins Hurst during the ceremonial check presentation. **Full coverage on Page 1B.**



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Salaries for top-earning SCDC employees

From staff reports

Bryan Stirling might be the head of South Carolina's prisons, but he's not the agency's highest paid employee. Instead, three psychiatrists are the top earners at the state Department of Corrections. They are followed by a physician, with Stirling's \$168,043 wage making him the fifth highest paid in the system — and more than \$100,000 below the top paid psychiatrist, Beverly Wood, who earns \$275,000. It's not uncommon among state agencies for someone other than the director to make the top salary.

At the Department of Health and Environmental Control, for instance, a physician is the top wage-getter at \$225,000. When the director's seat was last filled, the salary amount was just shy of \$200,000. On the state salary database maintained by the Department of Administration, USC football coach Will Muschamp is listed as the highest earner with \$1.1 million — his actual pay is \$4.2 million. Not listed was Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney, who makes about \$6.75 million. The database lists those earning

above \$50,000 as the individual salary amounts for public employees earning below that wage is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act. Among those prison employees listed, 83 are correctional officers and nine are law enforcement officers. Together, they make up about one of every five employees who make more than \$50,000. Also, 340 employees — or about 71.89 percent — received bonuses ranging from \$250 to \$3,000 among the 473 who make more than \$50,000. The agency employs close to 5,000 people.

LAWSUIT

From page 1A

paid \$63,000. McFadden, whose position is still listed as warden but isn't assigned to a prison, makes \$78,639 and received a \$1,000 bonus. Blackwell retired in lieu of being fired, his suit alleges. McFadden and Blackwell were in charge of the maximum-security prison in Ridgewell that houses more than 1,200 inmates when Jimmy Causey escaped. The inmate put a dummy in his bed and, using a cellphone and wire cutters brought in by a drone, made his way from the prison on July 4, 2017. It was 18 hours before officers noticed he was missing. He was captured two days later in Texas with nearly \$50,000 in cash. The suits paint a dire picture of manpower at the time of the escape: A minimum of 26 officers are needed to run Lieber, with a recommended number of 42. Instead, the facility had just 15 officers working. This mirrors a statewide shortage of officers. They also note that the prison system did not classify Causey appropriately after a prior escape, which meant he was in the general population at Lieber. Despite systemic issues, the suits said, McFadden and Blackwell were made to be scapegoats. McFadden's supervisor told him he would likely receive corrective action because his "name was on the sign" and that top prison officials "are trying to fire you," his lawyer wrote. Officials conducted an audit of the facility in the wake of the escape, according to the documents, and cited the audit in taking action against the two men, though prison leaders did not cite the escape and only referred to "trivial findings such as unsigned log books and trash in the yard." Listed as causes of actions are defamation and civil conspiracy. The state Department of Corrections has not filed answers to either complaint. The

department does not comment on pending litigation. **Classification error?** Blackwell and McFadden aren't the only ones with concerns about how inmates are classified. In a lawsuit brought by the family of Ryan Mansfield, their lawyers allege that he was misclassified as a violent offender and placed with a roommate who took his life. Mansfield was 24 when he was found strangled in his cell July 21, 2016 at Lieber Correctional. He was serving time on burglary and theft convictions with his release projected for March 2017. His roommate, Michael Jerome Brice, has been charged with murder in connection to the death. According to the lawsuit, prison officials had incorrectly recorded that Mansfield had struck an employee despite never having been disciplined for or charged with such an act, which is what led to Mansfield and Brice becoming roommates. Brice, who is serving a 13-year sentence on five drug and weapon counts out of York County, had already been disciplined for attacking an inmate and was a felon prior to his latest conviction. He was about six months into his stint when Mansfield died. Prior to Mansfield's death, the civil action said, a request was made to prison officials that the two men be separated because they couldn't get along. Lawyers also wrote that there was inadequate staffing and that, after Brice had alerted officers that something was wrong with Mansfield, staff members walked by at least three times, each time looking at him but not attempting to render aid. Eventually, the suit says, someone came by to remove him from the cell but no one attempted to perform CPR or take any other lifesaving measures at the scene. Brice, now 36, is awaiting trial on the murder charge. *Contact Assistant Editor Matthew Hensley at 864-943-2529 or on Twitter @IJMattHensley.*

Salaries for SCDC employees making more than \$100,000		
These salaries, which come courtesy of the state Department of Administration, were current as of April 16, 2018. Check indexjournal.com for a list of all state Department of Corrections employees making \$50,000 or more.		
NAME	TITLE	TOTAL PAY
Wood, Beverly	Psychiatrist	\$275,000
Poiletman, Robert	Psychiatrist	\$250,000
Sridaran, Mohan	Psychiatrist	\$250,000
McRee, John	Physician	\$182,316
Stirling, Bryan	Agency Head	\$168,043
Rafi, Sadia	Physician	\$149,406
Lewis Jr., Benjamin	Physician	\$141,016
Byrne, Thomas	Physician	\$141,016
Holbrook, Thomas	Physician	\$141,016
Way, Charles	Physician	\$141,016
Days, Jacques	Physician	\$141,016
Russell Jr., Hamilton	Physician	\$141,016
McCall Jr., David	Dpty/Div Director-Exec Comp	\$136,608
Meyer Jr., Halford	Physician	\$136,578
Smith, Stacy	Physician	\$136,578
Marshall, Terre	Dpty/Div Director-Exec Comp	\$135,000
Elliott, Salley	Attorney VI	\$134,225
Osmer, Thomas	Dpty/Div Director-Exec Comp	\$120,802
Bolchoz, Brian	Dpty/Div Director-Exec Comp	\$117,571
Walker Staley, Nena	Dpty/Div Director-Exec Comp	\$117,571
Reagan, Randy	Superintendent Of Education	\$113,931
Gambrell, Melissa	Nurse Practitioner II	\$110,000
Mitchell Hamilton, Carol	Nurse Practitioner II	\$108,474
Rushton, Colie	Program Manager III	\$108,022
Vincent, Barton	Attorney V	\$104,500
Akerman Jr., William	Dentist	\$104,263
Moak, Anna	Nurse Practitioner II	\$102,580
Patterson, Dennis	Administrative Manager II	\$102,000
Shealy, Trevis	Program Manager III	\$101,368
Knox, Wendy	Pharmacist II	\$101,339
Garcia, Madelyn	Physician's Asst	\$100,668
Lapointe, Roxanne	Nurse Practitioner II	\$100,087
Anderson, Joel	Administrative Manager II	\$100,000

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McGinn Construction
Meredith Insurance
Merle Norman
Mill House
Model Hair Styles
Mud Pies
Nationwide
Nature Scape
Neighbors United Credit Union
Pediatric Dentistry of Greenwood
Premier Properties
Pro Cleaners
Purple Door
Quarles Supply
Railroad Museum
Reagan Flooring
RE/MAX
Rental Center
Rudd's
Rugs of Distinction
Rush Heating
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2 SECTIONS, 18 PAGES

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 2018

DAILY \$1, SUNDAY \$2

Problems at prisons

Mental health issues tied to settlements after deaths

By **MATTHEW HENSLEY**
mhensley@indexjournal.com

An 18-year-old from Newberry who'd already been attacked by other inmates said he wouldn't "make it in regular prison."

A 30-year-old from Saluda County had lost a quarter of his body weight from fasting and claimed end times were at hand.

A 33-year-old who was known to be delusional told two other inmates he planned to take his own life, and those inmates warned an officer.

All three were mentally ill.
All three showed warning signs.
All three were found hanged by their own bed sheets.

Lawsuits filed on behalf of their families charge that prison workers failed to properly treat their mental illnesses. The state Department of Corrections settled the three suits without admitting any liability in their deaths.

Two of those deaths happened at Kirkland Correctional — the same maximum-security Columbia prison where four inmates were strangled in a 30-minute span, with attorneys claiming that those killings were also linked to inadequate mental health care.

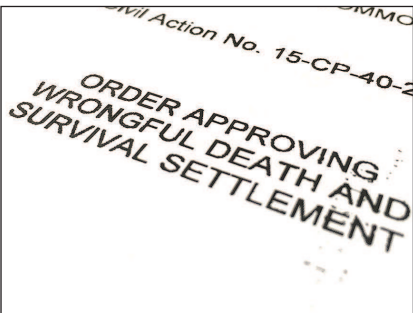
Authorities think an 18-year-old found unresponsive at Kirkland on Friday also died by suicide, though the circumstances around the teen's death remain under investigation and additional details have not been released.

Dead in 66 days

Dalton Slaton, an 18-year-old from Newberry, reported to Kirkland Correctional on Nov. 4, 2013 after violating his probation.

During his initial medical screening, he denied having any mental health issues. However, his family's attorneys write, he "cut himself, threatened further injury to himself, and was hearing voices," a prison officer reported one day after Christmas that year. He told a mental health counselor that he'd been attacked by other inmates and that "he would 'not make it in regular prison' because he was 'not a fighter.'"

On New Year's Eve, the prison received documentation on his past treatment for mental illness and a counselor recommended Slaton stay in crisis intervention status. Two days later, the same counsel-



The state Department of Corrections have settled a number of lawsuits after suicides as the agency grapples with overhauling its mental health services.

or deemed him ready to rejoin general population — over Slaton's objections. The move happened that same day.

Attorneys write that on Jan. 6, 2014, Slaton walked a nurse through his history of "physical, emotional, and sexual abuse" at the hands of a relative and his past attempts at suicide and self harm.

Late Jan. 7, 2014 or early the following morning, Slaton was found hanged in his cell. He was 18 and had spent just 66 days in prison.

The state Department of Corrections agreed to settle a medical malpractice suit for \$150,000, with \$67,500 going to the law firm Hodge & Langley to cover attorneys' fees and another \$28,932 going to the firm to reimburse actual costs and expenses. The remaining \$53,567.43 went to the teen's estate.

'A gross deviation'

When Jermaine Tyrone Fuller transferred into Broad River Correctional from McCormick on Jan. 24, 2012, he'd already been classified as an MI3, attorneys for his family said, indicating he was a mental health outpatient.

Even so, 26 months passed before the Ridge Spring man was seen by a mental health professional at the maximum-security prison in Columbia, and he was prescribed an antidepressant. Attorneys said that was the last psychiatric care he received while in custody.

On March 9, 2016, Fuller's weight dropped to 126 pounds as he'd been "fasting for religious purposes" and was "rambling about 'the end is coming.'" Forty days earlier, he weighed 164 pounds.

"The failure to have (Fuller) immedi-

See **PRISONS**, page 5A



DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ | INDEX-JOURNAL

Lee Logan, right was inducted into the Abbreville County Hall of Fame on Thursday night at the chamber's annual banquet, where Susan Jackson presented him the honor.

'This is your night'

Abberville chamber hosts 39th annual banquet

By **DAMIAN DOMINGUEZ**
ddominguez@indexjournal.com

It was an evening for the influencers — the 39th annual Greater Abberville Chamber of Commerce banquet reflected on the ways various chamber projects have influenced people's lives throughout the community.

Thursday's banquet brought together local business owners, chamber board members, community leaders and others to enjoy a catered dinner while talking about the latest updates in the area. While Abberville city undergoes a beautification project, the chamber is backing a penny sales tax referendum that chamber President Edie New said is an opportunity for a lot of improvement in the community.

"There's a lot of really neat things going on in Abberville, and I'm glad to be a part of it," she said. "Abberville Promise — I never thought I'd see the day where graduating students at Abberville High School would get two years of higher education paid for."

Chamber Executive Director Janice Corrievau ran through a history of recent chamber events, highlighting the ghost walk, wreath sale, daddy-daughter dance and oyster roast, among other events.

"Enjoy tonight, board members and guests," she said. "This is your



Abberville chamber of commerce members and guests lined up Thursday night to have their dinners served at the chamber's 39th annual banquet.

Abberville, and this is your night."

As the keynote speaker, Brad Evans focused on the ways Abberville-area organizations act as influencers in their community. Evans serves as chairman of the board for the Freshwater Coast Community Foundation, a group he said that started as a gathering of community influencers looking for ways to improve their home.

"In 2015 we got our 501(c)(3), we had a great start and we got a kick start from our great partners

at West Carolina," he said.

The FCCF went on to partner with other groups to serve Abberville, McCormick and Star-Iva by helping provide educational and business resources. The group began working with Abberville County on a strategic plan, which included an educational component that later evolved into the Abberville Promise.

He said the Promise has come a long way to ensure a student from Abberville County can go to Piedmont Tech and take the classes they want at no cost.

"The Abberville Promise is our commitment to influence our young people," he said.

Afterward, chamber board members and guests presented several awards to people in attendance. Lee Logan was inducted into the Abberville County Hall of Fame, and Dr. David Lewis was inducted posthumously. Paige Bowser, owner of Breezy Quarters on Trinity Street, accepted the award for Abberville County Business of the Year, while Jimmy Wilson was awarded the chamber's Ambassador of the Year title.

Abberville County students Kamiya Shosan, Victoria Hargrove and Bryson Glenn were also honored for their earning the chamber's community spirit scholarships.

Check out the old store up US 25. Wait... it's where?



SUBMITTED

This store is NOT along Highway 25 between Greenwood and Ware Shoals. Instead, it's just north of Hickory Tavern.

By **MATTHEW HENSLEY**
mhensley@indexjournal.com

Well, we did it y'all.
#FakeNews.

On the front page of Thursday's edition was a striking photo of an old building with nifty, if antiquated, signage from years gone by.

Below it, author and columnist Tom Poland writes that he had to "photograph this old store on U.S. Highway 25 between Ware Shoals and Greenwood," noting that he didn't know who owned this charming shop from the past, but thanked him anyway.

We made sure to up the point size on his lead, in part to drive home the local angle on this column that was distributed statewide, making it about three times the size of the rest

of the body copy on the page.

Only that store's not there.

Evidently caught up on his "Sentimental journey," as is emblazoned atop the passage, he minced the locale — it's actually along Highway 101, just north of Hickory Tavern.

You can blame the fact checkers on this one. This building looked so darn familiar, we believed wholeheartedly it must be within the boundaries of Greenwood County and not across the lake. We apologize for the error, and certainly hope none of our readers spent the day riding that stretch of U.S. 25 looking for a building that's not there — especially since gas prices just jumped about 20 cents a gallon.

Since we seem a bit confused about what is here, maybe you can help us out by sending us your photos of old and interesting buildings

from across Greenwood County. Email those photos to Assistant Editor Matthew Hensley at mhensley@indexjournal.com, or tweet them @ijindexjournal with the hashtag #ThisISgwdco. We don't know what we'll do with them yet, but maybe your pic could appear in a future edition.

And if you want to see for yourself that building Tom Poland photographed, head north from Hickory Tavern up Highway 101, like you're going to Simpsonville, and it's on the left just before Mahon Road. We promise!

Don't just take our word for it — check Google Maps.

Contact Assistant Editor Matthew Hensley at 864-943-2529 or on Twitter @IJMattHensley.

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Rezone denial unique circumstance for county officials

By ADAM BENSON
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Every year, dozens of zoning decisions are made by the Greenwood County Council.

Most are routine matters of changing a parcel's use from one designation to another — relegated to minutes and becoming law with little fanfare. But on Tuesday, a different kind of vote was taken: One that gave councilmembers pause before meeting with approval for what officials said was in the best interest of the county.

By a 5-2 margin, the council denied a request to convert 63 acres along Highway 72 West and Grange Road from general commercial and single-family residential to agricultural — a move that would allow for mobile and manufactured homes.

Among the properties in that acreage is one owned by Charlene Hughes, whose mobile home is covered by a medical hardship exemption — one of just three in place across the county.

"My daughter lives on this property with me. She's there for my medical reasons and I want it changed so when something happens to me, she will be able to stay," Hughes told County Council. "If I die, I don't want to have her lose the home."

According to the county's Code of

Ordinances, a special variance voids 30 days after the hardship has been remedied.

"At that time the unit shall be moved to an appropriately zoned area and the site restored to its original state," language in the ordinance states.

Since spot zoning isn't allowed, county planning officials encouraged Hughes to petition her neighbors for a larger rezone. Eight property owners signed on to the request, which was backed by the City/County Planning Commission.

Hughes' property is "split-zoned" between a residential and commercial designation, neither of which allows manufactured homes. Changing the entire swath to agricultural, however, would open up the possibility of 126 mobile homes on the land — something that concerned councilmembers

and at least one nearby resident.

"I'm not so much concerned about the one trailer that's on the property. If there was a variance that could be done to allow that to stay, that would not bother me in any way," resident Ryan Flynn told the council. "I'm concerned that if it is rezoned, up to two trailers per acre would be allowed, and that would change the makeup of the area significantly. I would worry about property values and increased traffic coming through. I don't want to turn the area into a trailer park."

Council chairman Steve Brown acknowledged the unique circumstances facing members prior to the vote — before opting to deny Hughes' request.

"We're trying to solve one problem by creating several more. For the sake of this hardship, we're opening up all of that property to that potential" of

mobile home construction, Brown said. "For me, I have as much concern for some of those who have invested in their properties and it's just as wrong to make that decision as it is possibly to not let this person stay. It's a tough decision, but that's what we've been elected to do."

Councilmembers Mark Allison, Theo Lane, Chuck Moates and Robbie Templeton voted with Brown, while Gonza Bryant and Edith Childs sided with Hughes.

"I cannot believe we can sit here in Greenwood County and not have a way to help this young lady stay where she is. I just cannot vote to make their daughter move if something happens to their mother," Bryant said.

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PRISONS

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ately seen by (a) mental health professional was a gross deviation from the appropriate standard of medical care," an attorney wrote in the civil action.

Nurses stapled a wound shut three days later after he was involved in a fight. The next day, he reported hallucinating but wasn't given medical attention. The day after that, he tried to remove the staples and the nurse who treated him "described him as being very pale and emaciated," the filing said.

At 11:20 a.m. on March 15, 2016, Fuller is found hanged in his room after other inmates asked a staff member to check in on him. He was last seen alive about 12 hours earlier. He was 30.

The state Department of Corrections agreed to settle a medical malpractice suit for \$400,000, with \$160,000 going to the attorneys' fees for the Law Offices of Elliott & Phelan LLC and the Starkes Law Firm LLC, with an additional \$9,136.34 going to the firms to cover actual expenses. The remaining \$230,863.66 was awarded to his estate, with his three children — all minors — expected to receive the funds.

Twice warned

Because of his "chronic mental illness" — Gregory K. Johnson had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder — the man was assigned to Kirkland Correctional because it "typically houses inmates with chronic mental or medical illnesses," wrote attorneys for his mother, who lives in Greenville.

Johnson was admitted to Gilliam Psychiatric Hospital on Jan. 7, 2013 "as a result of his suicidal ideations." When he was discharged two months later, he was ordered to fully comply with his medication.

In May of that year, he "began exhibiting signs of manic and delusional behavior," which staff also noted on June 3 and 11.

On June 23, he told two fellow inmates that he would kill himself. Those inmates warned an officer, the attorneys wrote, but the officer took no action. The next day, he gave the same warning to the two inmates and they again warned the officer — and again nothing done.

At 7:19 a.m. on June 24, 2013, Johnson carried a bed sheet to a supply closet, where he made a noose and hanged himself from a water pipe. He was discovered nearly an hour later. He was 33.

The state Department of Corrections agreed to settle a medical malpractice suit for \$200,000, with \$80,000 going to the attorneys' fees for Evans Moore, LLC and Bell Legal Group, LLC and another \$13,892.11 for actual costs incurred by the firms.

'The most troubling'

These suicides were happening as a class-action lawsuit on behalf of about 3,500 inmates deemed seriously mentally ill — or about one in six of those incarcerated in state prisons was working its way through the courts.

Initially filed in 2005, the lawsuit took issue with substandard mental health care received by inmates, tying it to several deaths.

In his order, J. Michael

Baxley wrote that more than 70,000 filings he'd handled in his 14 years on the bench as a state circuit court judge — and that "this case, far above all others, is the most troubling."

Evidence showed that "inmates have died in the South Carolina Department of Corrections for lack of basic mental health care, and hundreds more remain substantially at risk for serious physical injury, mental decompensation, and profound, permanent mental illness," Baxley wrote. He noted that lackluster care was provided despite numerous internal and external reviews that "found multiple inadequacies and failures" in the prison system's mental health system.

His 45-page ruling was handed down Jan. 8, 2014 — hours after Dalton was found dead in his room — and included a bevy of problems the court demanded the agency fix. Among them were insufficient staffing, a poor system for evaluation, excessive and unnecessary use of force, improper oversight of medicating inmates and lack of observation.

"This litigation does not occur in a vacuum," he wrote. "What happens at the Department of Corrections impacts all of us."

After the ruling, it took more than two years to reach a settlement with attorneys on how to proceed.

Meanwhile, the suicides continued. An inmate in McCormick Correctional hanged himself in his cell Oct. 2, 2014 — after four unsuccessful suicide attempts in the preceding six weeks. That death led to a \$350,000 settlement.

The settlement became effective May 2, 2016 — about seven weeks after Fuller died.

Rising numbers of deaths

From 2001-14, 40 South Carolina inmates took their own lives, accounting for 4.5 percent of all prisoner deaths, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. That was below the national average of 6 percent. During that span, 24 inmates died by homicide, which was 2.7 percent of inmate deaths.

However, the state recorded its highest number of deaths by homicides and suicide in years in 2016 and 2017, according to the Post & Courier, which had to obtain those figures through a Freedom of Information Act request. Last year, six inmates died by suicide and 12 were killed by other inmates — accounting for nearly 21 percent of all inmate deaths in South Carolina prisons.

That beat the prior year, which saw five inmates killed — including two at McCormick Correctional — and six take their own lives.

The Post & Courier reports that 2017 was the fourth consecutive year of rising inmate deaths from homicide and suicide — and this year is already on track to be worse after seven inmates were killed during riots at Lee Correctional.

Last year served as a seminal year for inmate deaths in part because four inmates were killed at Kirkland Correctional on April 7, 2017 — about a year after the prison system entered into the settlement about mental health. Lawyers for the estates of those killed point to inadequate mental health care in lawsuits against the state Department of Corrections.

Within the confines of the F-2 unit at Kirkland, where the Department of Corrections houses those with "serious and/or persistent mental illness" for better monitoring and care, attorneys allege inept care was given to the nearly 140 inmates deemed mentally ill — including the two men accused of killing four of their fellow inmates.

The filings point to information from Sandra Johnson, who had been a licensed social worker since 1988 and had worked for the state Department of Health and Environmental Control for 17 years before beginning at Kirkland. Johnson said she was instructed to only see inmates when they reported a problem and to otherwise not provide treatment, despite the training manual and agency policy saying otherwise.

Denver Simmons and Jacob Phillip — each convicted of a double murder and both serving life sentences — have been charged in connection to the four deaths.

Each had severe mental health issues — Philip, for instance, had "command auditory hallucinations" and told a counselor that he watched a police sniper kill his father because he was stabbing his mom, and that his mother killed herself the day after he turned 8.

Simmons told the Associated Press the killings were meant to get the pair the death penalty — a motive both men had shared with staff members ahead of the quadruple slaying.

Those lawsuits are still pending in court, but the state Department of Corrections denies any wrongdoing in the deaths.

Struggling to comply

Part of the settlement of the class action lawsuit against the Department of Corrections put in place an implementation panel that performs quarterly site visits and reports on the progress made toward compliance.

The panel's sixth report stemmed from visits in March. That report shows the agency has made strides in some areas, and was making progress toward its goals in other areas.

The prison system was not compliant in a key area, however: remedying the staffing shortage among mental health professionals.

Of 178 mental health-related positions, nearly a quarter were vacant in March. Just one of three psychology jobs were filled, and the 30 percent of the psychiatry/nurse practitioner posts were empty.

The panel "cannot overemphasize the vital importance of having adequate numbers of appropriately qualified and trained staff," the report said. It notes that "the allocated staffing positions for SCDC do not appear to be adequate."

Other areas of noncompli-

ance, such as changes to how medicine is administered, are all linked to staffing shortages, according to the panel.

"The need for adequate resources cannot be overstated and even with some modest increases in operations staff and efforts to increase clinical staff, the deficiencies have not been corrected to the extent of providing substantial compliance in the elements of the Settlement Agreement," the report said.

Prison job vacancies go far beyond mental health services, with the state struggling to get officers to serve in front-line roles. While the agency has turned the corner with hiring for those jobs, adding more than 100 officers to its ranks since Jan. 1, 2017, many prisons still remain short staffed. About half of all security positions are open at McCormick, while Leath's vacancy rate for those positions is more than 30 percent.

Among the recommendations the agency is making progress toward is using clothing and sheets for inmates that are suicide-resistant.

Contact Assistant Editor Matthew Hensley at 864-943-2529.

More cases of whooping cough found in SC district

Associated Press

DUNCAN — Three more cases of whooping cough have been reported in a South Carolina school district, bringing the total number of cases to six.

Spartanburg District 5 spokeswoman Melissa Robinette said three cases were reported Wednesday, two at Berry Shoals Intermediate School and another at Beech Springs Intermediate.

The three cases reported earlier this month were at Beech Springs and Abner Creek Academy.

Robinette says principals at the schools have been letting parents know about the whooping cough.

She says additional cleaning will be conducted at the schools.



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